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Background Statement

I never felt like anyone had any expectations for me throughout my education before college. I did have two Math teachers who expected a lot from everyone, but I never felt like I was singled out as someone who would be able to accomplish much more. After high school I worked three jobs averaging around seventy hours a week, and the regulars that met me had high hopes for what I could achieve. They constantly told me they would miss seeing me around, but I needed to find my calling. I was not planning on going to college until I really had it set in my mind that I wanted to be a teacher, and in that case I had to go back to school. My family had always been supportive of me and knew I was a really hard worker. They also believed I could do anything I set my mind to. As for me, once I got my mind set on it I knew where I was supposed to be. I was supposed to be going to school to become a teacher so that I could motivate and inspire the students who came into my classroom.

Most of my classes have always been set up the same way, just rows of desks. It was not until taking my first education classes in college that I even worked at tables with my classmates. The new approach was much more welcoming and seemed to create an environment where I felt safe and appreciated for sharing my thoughts.

Even up until my experience in college, strategies my teachers have used have not varied much. There is usually some form of lecture and slideshow, and sometimes there is a short film to watch. Throughout my education, but mostly in middle school and high school, I feel like the learning strategy has been to just listen. The good thing about college though is that I have had amazing professors who use different and very affective techniques that have opened me up to asking a lot of questions and striving to make the best out of my education. Now I have seen a lot of strategies that help me to not just memorize information but that actually help me keep it locked in my brain. Those types of strategies usually are affective when I learn something and then get the chance to apply it. One type of strategy that does not work for me is to just sit and quickly scribble a bunch of notes. I believe that I am good at multi-tasking, but I cannot process new information that I am writing from a slideshow while my teachers are giving me even more information verbally. When things are not organized I can learn, but I really do appreciate organization and professionalism.

I really enjoy settings where I am learning new information or being correct. For me there is always more to learn when it comes to social studies, and as for math, well I feel like I was always correct in middle and high school. Along with that, I find the organization of a math problem surprisingly beautiful. I also love education settings where I can be creative and think of new ways to do things. It is so exciting to me that if I get the chance to think through something, like how to present a lesson, I might be able to teach in a more effective way.

One person who I always use as an example of a teacher who has had a major influence on my learning is Dr. Chris O’Brien. Not only do I find Dr. O’Brien’s teaching approach appropriate while also entertaining, having his support for my overachieving ways means a lot to me. To have complete respect for a teacher who respects my work as well helps to remind me that I am capable of being successful and reaching my dreams. I also believe that they key to being an inspirational teacher is to see the student not just as a student but as a person as well. One inspirational teacher who has proven that for me was Dr. O’Brien.

The middle and high schools that I attended were in the same city so I was around the same classmates for the majority of my education. In terms of socioeconomic levels students came from either working or middle class families. There was little diversity there with only a few students who obviously came from upper class families. As for ethnic diversity, there was not much of that either. My brother and I were the only Asian students, and other than us there were only two other colored students. I am not sure about any struggles they may have had in the highly white population, but I know my brother and I had issues with students not only seeing us as different but also having a problem with it.

The programs in middle and high school gave me no choice to do what I wanted. I wanted to take classes at the vocational school, but the structure of the programs were so set that even if I wanted to take one vocational class I would not have been able to complete my college preparation program. A lot of the classes I took during those years were not interesting to me or challenged me at all. The great thing about college is that although there is structure, there are more opportunities to take courses that I am interested in learning about.

The types of courses throughout my education have changed dramatically. In elementary and middle school there really were not any options for me. I had to take classes that were chosen for me. In high school it was a little different. I had to take a certain number of courses in each subject area. This meant I could choose classes to an extent, but the ones I wanted I did not always get into. At one point I had to take the same Math course three times because even though I was getting high scores they would not allow me to advance because they thought I would distract the AP students. College has been a different story though. Since money has been a problem in college at first I was very careful to take only the courses that were required for my degree, but I tried to make them as interesting to me as possible. Now I take what I want because my education is important to me, and I want to love what I am learning about. My current approach is so much more rewarding than my education during high school or middle school.

It seems simple and obvious, but my background has made me who I am. Every single hard or good thing that I have been through in my life has made me into the sensitive person that I am today. I have learned to think through things and pay attention to people and their actions. Because of my background I have those qualities that allow me to be stubborn with my opinions, but more importantly, allows me to be open-minded. The great thing about that is I am willing to accept other people’s ideas when they are better than mine even if it means rejecting my own. Having that background is important because absorbing and implementing as many ideas as I can will create the type of learning and teaching diversity that is needed in schools today.

I chose teaching as a profession because I want to make a difference. It does seem like everyone says it, but for me it definitely is the truth. When I was growing up sometimes I felt like the only person I could talk to was a teacher. If I did not have that type of support I do not know what I would be doing today. Being a teacher is my chance to share my passion for learning with my students who may or may not share that passion. The important part of this profession is being the person who can find ways to make the content approachable to students who may not be interested and make the connections they need for what they are learning to become relevant in their daily lives.

A superior teacher is someone who is in the profession for the students. A superior teacher is someone who is honest and willing to tell the truth. Knowing who to go to or making sure to find the right person when a student needs help when you cannot offer it is a characteristic of a superior teacher. Being concerned with all students’ learning and paying attention to what they need is very important. Finding ways to customize every lesson for every student also separates a superior teacher from an average one. Wanting to have the students’ best interests in mind is one of the marks of being a superior teacher. In order for me to be that for my students I want to get to know them as much as I can. Constantly observing them and their reactions to what happens during a lesson is crucial in order to customize lessons for the students in the class. Another thing that I hope will help me be a superior teacher is to always have time to listen and talk to students as well as be able to read them and know what they need from me even if they are too scared to tell me.

There is not an easy way to say what I hope to gain from being a teacher. I hope to gain the trust and respect of my students, but mostly I am looking forward to the feelings being a teacher will give me. Being a part of a community and being a good role model for students are things I am very excited for. I am also hoping to gain all the knowledge I can from my students. It is their experiences and stories that will help me be a better teacher for the rest of the students that spend time in my classroom.

I hope that when I am a teacher I can bring a new perspective to teaching. It is very refreshing that there are so many students at UMF that are excited for the same thing, but from my experience I have seen a lot of teachers who do not consider different ideas and new ways to teach. If they do consider it maybe they are too tired or negative about it, but I do not want people telling me my ideas are not realistic anymore. I want my ideas to be to be the everyday normal.

I would say I am scared of some of the firsts that I will experience as a teacher. Of course firsts will not always be a bad thing, but I wish that I could know everything right from the beginning and never make mistakes. I take this profession very seriously because I will be influencing hundreds of lives, and as much as I would love for it all to be a positive influence, I do worry about when I do not reach all students. I am a thinker, and I am sure I will never stop thinking about what I can do better.